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# Sculptures in the Air: ASL Poetry and Literature Collections at RIT/NTID Deaf Studies Archive, Rochester, NY

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Council on Library  
and Information  
Resources Grant  
(CLIR) Logo



# ASL Poetry Grant

Inclusive Libraries Conference

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Flying Words Project by Nancy Rourke

# “Hydrogen Jukebox” by Patrick Graybill







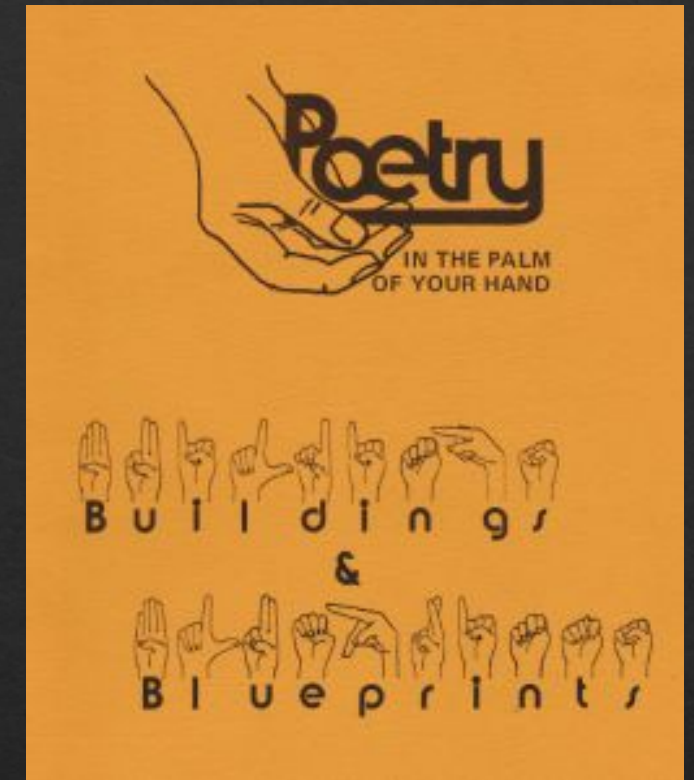
Ella Mae Lentz, 1978

# INTRODUCTION

- ◆ Council of Library and Information Resources Grant (CLIR)
- ◆ Suggestions for successful grant submission
- ◆ ASL LITERATURE COLLECTIONS  
Gratitude to Miriam and Kenny Lerner and others  
for their collections
- ◆ Process for Digital Public Library dissemination
- ◆ Deaf and Hearing Poets
- ◆ Deaf Literature Website



John Canney, 1978



Cover of 1978 *Poetry in the Palm of Your Hand* post conference publication

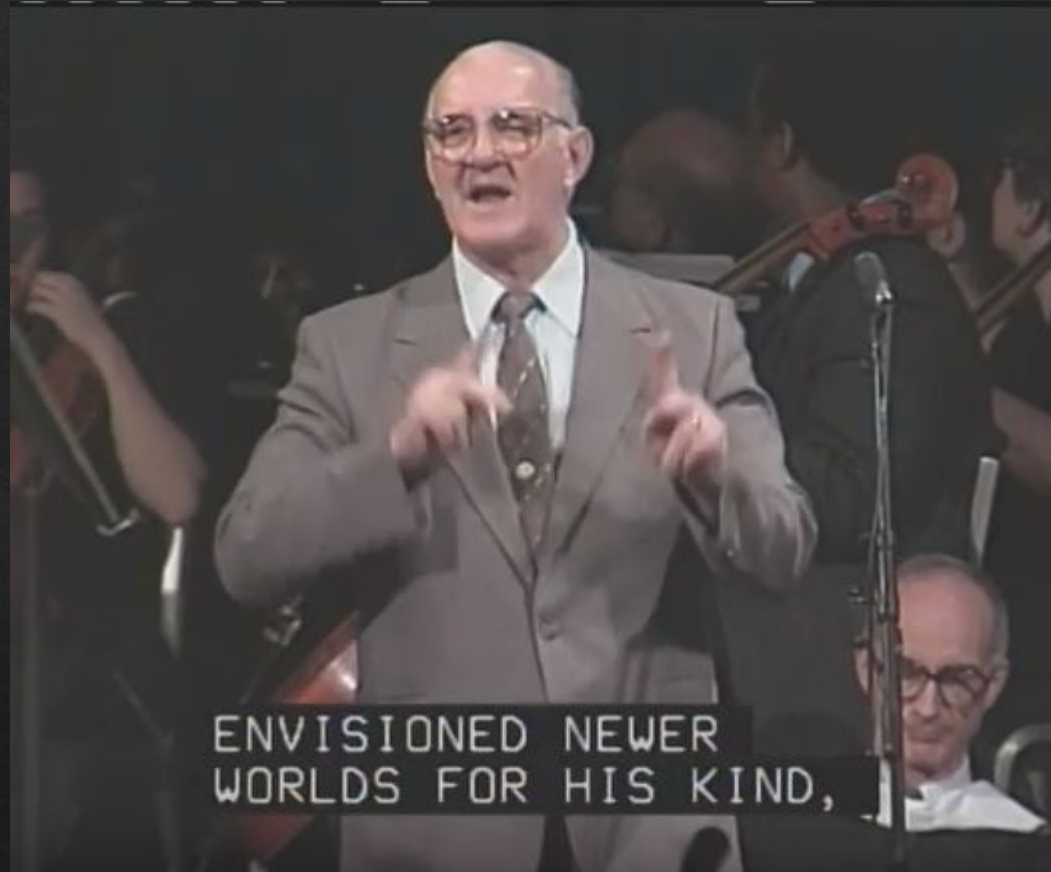
## Sculptures in the Air: An Accessible Online Video Repository of the American Sign Language (ASL) Poetry and Literature Collections at the RIT/NTID Deaf Studies Archive (RIT/NTID DSA) in Rochester, NY

Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) Libraries will digitize 61 videotapes held in the RIT/NTID DSA that document the ASL literature movement in Rochester from 1970-1999. These videotapes will represent the largest collection of rare U.S. ASL Literature to be made publically accessible. Preservation digital copies will be made and stored, and access digital copies provided for use by scholars and the general public.

This collection will be universally accessible: it will be captioned, voiced, transcribed and/or signed. The once “hidden” work of this pioneering and under-represented group will be made public for the first time, broadening access to the cultural heritage of this diverse group little known outside of the Deaf community and enriching interdisciplinary studies in linguistics, poetry, performing arts, and cinema. Finally, this project can shape a new understanding of the libraries’ role in modeling best practices for accessible sharing of online videos.



# “NTID” by Dr. Robert Panara





Robert Panara, 1984

# Background Information



Dandelions by Nancy Rourke

- ◆ NTID at Rochester, NY hosted the first ASL Poetry and Literature conferences, starting in 1984.
- ◆ Jim Cohn arranged a presentation session with Alan Ginsberg and Robert Panara in 1984.
- ◆ This sparked an ASL Poetry movement which nurtured several Deaf student poets, including Peter Cook.
- ◆ ASL Poetry and ASL Literature conferences (1987, 1991 and 1996)
- ◆ Prominent Deaf poets presented at these conferences before DVDs were distributed.
- ◆ Discovered 1978 Indiana “Poetry in the Palm of Your Hand” conference materials which were donated.
- ◆ Unique literary expression deserving of wider attention among the literary world.
- ◆ Libraries are digitizing unique collections like this for dissemination across the world.
- ◆ ASL Scholar, Karen Christie invited to write summaries of the poetical works.
- ◆ First time an important body of ASL Literature works will be available to the world for further study.

# “Hands” by Dr. Clayton Valli





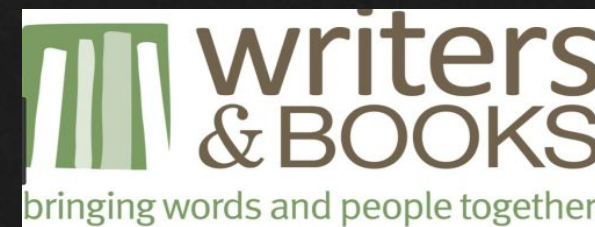


Eric Malz and Peter Cook, 1989



# Background Information

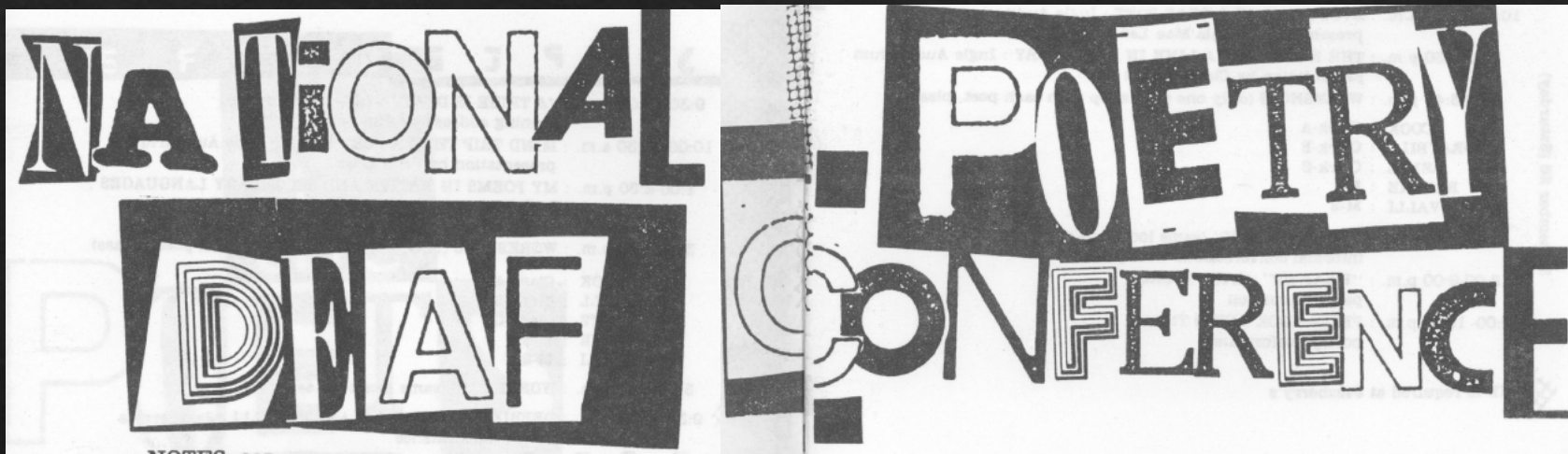
- ◆ We applied for full accessibility, ie, making videos closed captioned, voiced, and with interactive transcripts. The viewer has the option to turn off the captions and voice. We also will have visual descriptions of the videos for DB viewers.
- ◆ One way to make the grant unique (aside from the content matter) was to stress that this would be accessible to all.
- ◆ Had to explain Deaf Culture and ASL as most grant people are not educated about Deaf Culture and take the medical view. Had to write this into the grant and include a bibliography of poetical works analyses to prove scholarship has been conducted.
- ◆ Grant project expected to be done by the end of March and will be posted publically.
- ◆ Challenge is getting release forms signed by all artists.



# Digital Public Library Process



- ♦ Work with our local library regional council (Rochester Regional Library Council-RRLC)
- ♦ Post videos and documents onto Content DM Database to upload into the [NY Heritage Digital Collections](#) database
- ♦ Upon submission, feeds into the [Digital Public Library of America](#) and [World Cat](#) where information will be displayed





# “Einstein Under the Apple Tree”

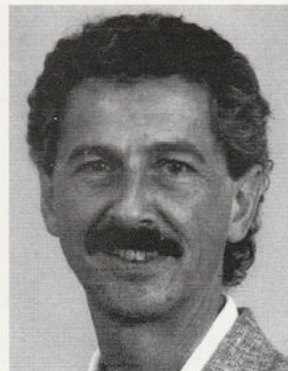
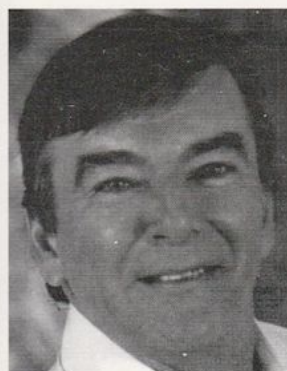
Flying Words Project: Peter Cook and Kenny Lerner





# Some Poets and Performers

- ◆ Ben Bahan
- ◆ Bruce Hlibok
- ◆ Bernard Bragg
- ◆ Peter Cook and Kenny Lerner
- ◆ Allen Ginsberg
- ◆ Patrick Graybill
- ◆ Bonnie Kramer
- ◆ Ella Mae Lentz
- ◆ Eric Malzkuhn
- ◆ Robert Panara
- ◆ Debbie Rennie
- ◆ Clayton Valli



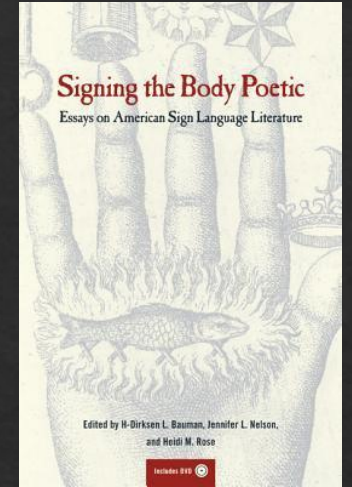
# “Black Hole: Colors of ASL” by Debbie Rennie







# Temporary Website



- ◆ Karen Christie has created this website: [ASL Lit: Preserving Our Treasure](#)
- ◆ Posted some flyers and program books from the conferences
- ◆ Posted unfinished videos (ie, not all captioned/voiced with interactive transcripts)
- ◆ Will post finished videos and documents when done with project



# Dr. Robert Panara Class Lecture

- ◆ Panara discussing a lyre to explain the five senses in a poetry classroom lecture

